

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
TOWN SELECT BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
Minutes of December 3, 2018

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair Kenneth W. Goslant, Board members Lynn Doney, Julie H. Goodrich, K. David Maxwell, and Nathaniel Miller. Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Finance Director Laurie Baroffio, and Elroy C. Hill.

Chair Goslant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

- II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Scheduled): None.**

III. BUDGET WORK SESSION

- a. Town General Revenue.** The meeting began with a discussion of the various licenses and fees that provide revenue to the municipality. This includes liquor licenses, dog licenses, zoning permits, etc. During a discussion of the "Special Details" that provide extra revenue for the Northfield Police Department (NPD) and the Northfield Ambulance Service (NAS), questions arose about the Vermont Governor's Highway Safety Program and whether it costs the municipality to provide NPD personnel and vehicles for "Click It or Ticket" (and other) roadside safety checks. Manager Schulz said the municipality was fully reimbursed for personnel costs but wasn't sure about full reimbursement for the use of NPD vehicles. A discussion of the current NPD vehicle fleet then followed. The focus was whether the NPD, which now has seven (7) full-time officers (including the Police Chief), really needed three (3) vehicles in regular patrol use and a fourth vehicle kept in reserve. Board member Miller asked whether the NPD patrol vehicles all had to be four-wheel drive SUVs. Manager Schulz said that was fairly standard for Vermont communities with hilly unpaved backroads. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio cannot remember a conscious decision by previous Select Boards to retain the fourth vehicle but this policy seemed to develop over time based on recommendations by previous police chiefs. Ms. Baroffio said the municipality currently only budgets for three (3) NPD vehicles in the department's Capital Equipment Plan (CEP). The vehicles are projected to have six (6) year service lives and the current replacement cost for each is about \$40,000. Board member Maxwell would prefer to purchase these vehicles with cash on hand rather than borrow funds. This and other matters related to the NPD budget will be discussed at the next budget meeting (12/06/18) when NPD Chief John Helfant is present.

Returning to Town General Revenues, Manager Schulz said NAS fees received are projected to be \$510,000, which is the same amount projected for the current fiscal year. Board member Maxwell wants to be sure that the NAS fees charged patients are comparable to those charged by other ambulance services in Central Vermont. It was noted the per capita charges for Roxbury and West Berlin were raised significantly over the past five (5) years when it was determined the Barre Town, Montpelier, and Randolph ambulance services charged much higher amounts to the neighboring communities they covered. The per capita charge for Roxbury and West Berlin is \$28 and after some discussion the Select Board consensus was to raise this to \$30. Ms. Baroffio noted NAS Chief Lawton Rutter has warned that raising the per capita charge too high might cause these communities to seek other options. However, the \$30 per capita charge remains less than what Barre Town, Montpelier, and Randolph would charge. Ms. Baroffio said the increase would raise an additional \$1,950 in revenue. There then followed a discussion of perhaps creating a policy so NAS could charge for calls for service not currently billed, which includes lift assists and/or no transport calls. Board member Doney similarly feels the Northfield Fire Department should be able to charge businesses for cleaning up gas leaks and other hazardous materials. Chair Goslant feels local emergency services should be compensated for all state-required callouts.

Manager Schulz noted the annual contribution from Norwich University (NU) will increase from \$188,000 to \$196,320 in the next fiscal year. This is almost twice as much as the amount NU provided to the municipality only two (2) years ago. Manager Schulz soon will provide the Select Board members with full breakdowns of the revenue generated by the municipal pool last summer. He investigated the matter before the pool opened last June and Manager Schulz found the fees Northfield charges are comparable to those at other Vermont public pools. Board member Doney would like better tracking of pool revenue and wants the lifeguards to make sure all pool users are paying the proper entrance fees. Chair Goslant agrees with other Select Board members that the municipal pool should be run in a more business-like fashion.

There followed a brief discussion of the Accounting Fees charged to the utility departments, which are treated as revenue. There was some concern the utilities should be paying more than they do and this matter will be explored further at a later time. Manager Schulz said the revenue amounts anticipated for speeding and parking tickets will remain unchanged in the next fiscal year. In addition, the amount Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) provides municipalities for the maintenance of Class I, II, and III Roads (based on mileage) has stayed the same for several years. It was the sentiment among the Select Board members that this was unfair given the rising cost of road maintenance in recent years in terms of both personnel and materials.

Manager Schulz said the utility departments will no longer compensate the municipality for use of the Highway Department's backhoe since they have purchased their own. The utility departments still will be charged \$4,500 in the next fiscal year for rental use of a Highway Department dump truck. Chair Goslant feels this amount should be increased to reflect the actual cost of using this piece of equipment. He also fears the vehicle is treated more harshly by the utility employees than the way they treat their own equipment. Manager Schulz said the amount charged is based on the average number of hours the vehicle is used by the utility departments each year. Ms. Baroffio noted this issue seems to arise every budget season. Board member Maxwell would like the vehicle's usage better tracked and a policy developed by the Utility Commissioners to ensure proper compensation. Elroy Hill believes most vehicle rental businesses impose a minimum fee whenever a vehicle is hired and the municipality should do the same.

Manager Schulz then said the amounts of the Current Use payment from the State of Vermont and the PILOT payment from the utility departments will remain the same in the next fiscal year. The PILOT receipts are related to utility-owned parcels within the municipality and Ms. Baroffio noted the correct amount of this annual payment had been a contentious subject prior to municipal merger. A discussion then followed regarding the number of local properties that have full or partial tax exemptions. Manager Schulz had provided a full list of these parcels to the Select Board members but Board member Maxwell is interested in knowing the exact amount of tax revenue not collected as a result. There also was a discussion of various local organizations who have or are seeking full or partial tax exemption in the next fiscal year and how the municipality had dealt with these requests in the past.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (Unscheduled): There was none.

V. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Board member Maxwell, seconded by Board member Goodrich, to adjourn. **Motion passed 5-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of December 11, 2018.